

Good afternoon Senator Prague and the rest of this distinguished committee. My name is Ceil Soucy. I am here speaking to you on House Bill #5650.

I am hopeful that my voice will be heard and you will be able to stop the continued discrimination in the Department of Correction and understand and recognize how "clerical workers" in the Department of Correction need your help in passing Bill #5650 amended for Hazardous Duty Retirement.

I am a secretary working in a correctional facility and have 16 years of service. I am assigned to a duty station that is located through the sally port (locked doors). Presently, my husband Ray Soucy, who many of you know, along with everyone else who works inside the institution (counselors, correction officers, management, school teachers, maintenance, food services, are all hazardous duty (which means working 20 years and receiving hazardous retirement). Clerical are considered working in an "unpleasant working condition" and receive only \$.55 an hour more. Clerical must be 60 years of age, work 25 years for retirement and still do not have the same benefit. A clerical just starting today at the age of 20 would have to work 40 years in order to retire without the same benefit as other DOC employees. Let me ask you this question. Is it not discrimination when you are working in the same institution, working with the same risks as everyone else, but yet do not receive the same benefit?

Our jobs subject us to possible assaults, hostage situations, or even an inmate retaliation on our families and ourselves. Corrections staff work together to protect the public from convicted felons. Public safety comes first, which means if an inmate were to hold one of us hostage, our life could be taken before we would let an inmate escape. The body count of clerical being injured on the job should not be the issue; it is the stress and the risk factor of possible injury that working for corrections counts. Clerical must stay in facilities as late as any one else due to incidents. Clerical, along with hazardous duty staff, are required to complete the same mandatory training: First Aid, CPR, HIV, Fire Safety, Inmate Suicides, Diversity, Behavior Management. We are in direct contact with the same inmates and yet do not receive the same benefit. Why are we being discriminated against?

I know that some of you are aware of what it is like to work in a correctional facility but I hope my testimony has helped all of you get a better insight. A tour of a facility can also be arranged.

I truly hope you can help us. I would like to thank all of you for your understanding.

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